



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Policy Manual

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Subchapter:	1	Office of Education	
Issuance:	37-B	School Vehicle Transportation – Drivers and Escorts Responsibilities	

Purpose:

This issuance establishes policy and procedure related to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Office of Education (OOE) to ensure that all School Vehicle Drivers are properly licensed, trained, and meet all the requirements of applicable statutes and regulations.

Authority:

- N.J.S.A. 18A:39-17
- N.J.S.A. 18A:39-18
- N.J.S.A. 18A:39-19.1
- N.J.S.A. 18A:39-20
- N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.
- All New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (NJMVC) rules governing school vehicle drivers
- N.J.A.C. 6A:27-1 et seq.

Policy:

A) Licensure Requirements

1. Every School Vehicle Driver employed by the DCF OOE shall possess a current Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with Passenger (P) and School Bus/Vehicle (S) endorsements, and shall meet each requirement of applicable statutes and regulations
2. In accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:27-12.1(a), School Vehicle Drivers and Escorts shall be reliable persons of good moral character who possess the qualifications and communication skills necessary to perform the duties of the position.
3. As mandated by federal law and regulations, School Vehicle Drivers must submit to random drug tests for the presence of alcohol, narcotics, or habit-producing drugs in accordance with the New Jersey Controlled Dangerous Substances Act and the Statewide Policy for Drug and Alcohol Testing of Employees.
4. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 39:3B-25, a School Vehicle Driver is prohibited from using a cellular or other wireless telephone while operating a school vehicle except in an emergency, or when the school vehicle is parked in a safe area off a roadway.

Procedures:

1) School Vehicle Driver Licensure

- A) A DCF School Vehicle Driver shall:
 - 1) Be at least 21 years of age and have a minimum of three years of regular driving experience to be eligible for a CDL license;
 - 2) Possess a valid CDL with P & S endorsements and New Jersey photo driver's license;
 - 3) Possess acceptable proof of social security number or exemption;
 - 4) Upon offer of employment and every two years thereafter, pass a physical examination to include hearing and visual acuity tests by a licensed physician. The Medical Certification Card and physical examination report as allowable, shall be provided to the Head Bus Driver or designee and a copy to the Regional Transportation Coordinator. This medical certification process shall occur annually for a driver aged 70-74 and every six (6) months for a driver aged 75 and older;
 - 5) Renew and obtain a valid Commercial New Jersey Driver's License with P & S endorsements a minimum of three weeks before CDL expiration date;
 - 6) Provide proof of renewed CDL to the Head Bus Driver or designee and Regional Transportation Coordinator a minimum of three weeks before the school vehicle driver's CDL expires;

- 7) Meet tuberculin testing requirements when first employed pursuant to N.J.S.A.18A:16-2;
 - 8) Submit to random drug tests for the presence of alcohol, narcotics or habit-producing drugs in accordance with the New Jersey Controlled Dangerous Substances Act and the Statewide Policy for Drug and Alcohol Testing of Employees; and
 - 9) Submit to a criminal history record check every two years.
- B) Each new School Vehicle Driver application shall be processed as per the current State of New Jersey, Department of Personnel and DCF Human Resources requirements.
 - C) The Head Bus driver or designee shall retain, in a locked cabinet or desk, a current driver qualification employment record for each school vehicle driver. At a minimum, these records shall include:
 - 1) A copy of the School Vehicle Driver's license to document each driver's license number with the class of license, endorsement to operate a school vehicle, and issuing state;
 - 2) A copy of the portion of a current medical practitioner's certificate that verifies authorization to operate a school vehicle; and
 - c. The current NJMVC's abstract of each driver's record.
 - D) The DCF OOE Personnel Unit shall retain all information pertaining to each School Vehicle Driver's criminal history background check.
 - E) The DCF OOE shall secure an abstract of the driving record of each School Vehicle Driver every three (3) months and anytime it is deemed necessary.
 - F) The Head Bus driver or designee shall maintain, in a locked cabinet or desk, a completed, current [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT4](#), **School Bus Driver Certification Roster** which shall be available for review by the MVC during inspections.
 - G) Each School Vehicle Driver shall immediately notify the Head Bus Driver or designee and Regional Transportation Coordinator of any tickets, suspensions, accidents, or violations pertaining to their driver's license and CDL credentials. Failure to notify may result in disciplinary actions. The OOE Regional Transportation Coordinator shall investigate the charges and ensure that all CDL requirements have been satisfied prior to allowing the driver to resume their duties.

2) School Vehicle Driver Responsibilities

- A) The School Vehicle Driver shall be responsible for the safe operation of the school vehicle.
- B) Drivers are responsible for light maintenance to include but not limited to, changing light bulbs, fuses, light covers, infant and convertible car seats.
- C) Drivers are responsible for checking and filling vehicle fluids to include but not limited to antifreeze, windshield washer fluid, motor oil, etc.

- D) Drivers shall clear any snow from the roof of the vehicle that may have accumulated, prior to any usage of the vehicle.
- E) While the vehicle is in transit, the Driver shall be the responsible decision maker in all matters relating to vehicle safety, weather-related road conditions, and mechanical operations.
- F) Drivers shall wear seat belts whenever the vehicle is in motion.
- G) At the beginning and upon completion of each shift, drivers shall sign in and out of the electronic timekeeping system (eCATS). Unless they have been assigned extra time for school vehicle-related duties, Drivers shall leave the RS premises at the end of the regular work shift.
- H) Drivers are responsible for accurately documenting all required DCF transportation paperwork which includes daily [NJ MVC Drivers Vehicle Inspection Report](#), [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT2](#), **School Vehicle Maintenance Reports**, [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT5](#), **Daily Vehicle Logs**, [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT6](#), **State Property Sign Out Sheet**, [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT7](#), **E-Z Pass Reports**, and other related paperwork as applicable.
- I) A Driver transporting a group of staff and students on a class trip shall be compensated for the entire time of the trip. The Driver shall remain at the location of the class trip for the duration of the outing.
- J) Responsibilities of each Driver shall include, but are not limited to:
 - 1) Passenger safety;
 - 2) Conducting complete and thorough pre-trip inspections of the school vehicle and its equipment prior to every run using the NJMVC Drivers Vehicle Inspection Report. This report must be completed for each run and given to the Head Bus Driver or designee to be signed at the end of each morning and afternoon shift;
 - 3) Completing the [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT6](#), **Daily Vehicle Log** and the State Property Sign Out Sheet at the beginning and end of each run;
 - 4) Reporting school vehicle defects to the Head Bus Driver or designee on the shift they are observed. These reports shall be both verbal and in writing using the [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT3](#), **School Vehicle Maintenance Report**;
 - 5) Completing all other forms, reports, and documents, as required, such as the [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT7](#), **E-Z Pass Report**, [State of NJ Vehicle Accident Form](#), [State of NJ Vehicle Incident Form](#), and the [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT9](#), **Student Transportation Incident Report**;
 - 6) Adhering to established routes, school vehicle stops, and student pick up time schedules, and the adherence of not transporting any student who has been suspended from school or from school transportation;

- 7) Participating in trainings and in conducting emergency evacuation drills in accordance with this policy and subsequent addendums;
 - 8) Always driving defensively;
 - 9) Maintaining the cleanliness of the interior and exterior of the vehicles, including washing the exterior and sanitizing the interior of the vehicle twice a month weather permitting;
 - 10) Transporting only eligible students, eligible infants and toddlers, authorized school personnel, or persons stipulated in a student's IEP; and
 - 11) Assuring that the vehicle has no passengers, including staff on board while it is being re-fueled.
- K) When there is no Escort on the school vehicle the Driver shall:
- 1) Supervise all students on the vehicle and assume responsibility for making decisions regarding student safety while the vehicle is in transit. Consultation in these cases shall be sought with the ES, as necessary and feasible;
 - 2) Check to ensure that the safety and securement systems for all students, infants, and toddlers in the vehicle are appropriately placed, fastened, and secured; and
 - 3) Ensure that any approved loose items brought onto the school vehicle such as a backpack, baby stroller, oxygen, etc. are properly secured before the vehicle moves. (i.e. A backpack can be secured with the student's seat belt.).
- L) At the conclusion of each run, the Driver shall confirm that there are no students or other passengers remaining on the vehicle by conducting a visual inspection, walking from the front to the back of the vehicle.
- 1) If it is discovered that a student has been left unattended on a school vehicle, the ES shall notify the Director, OOE, or designee and complete the [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT10](#), **Student Left Unattended on a Bus form** and forward this form to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools in the applicable county within 10 days of the incident.
 - 2) After due process, and a determination that a driver left a student on the school vehicle at the end of their route, that driver's school bus and vehicle endorsement shall be suspended for six (6) months for a first offense and permanently for a second offense. In either case, if a student is harmed, the driver's school vehicle and bus endorsements shall be permanently revoked.
- M) At the end of each run the driver shall carefully check for any indications of vandalism or damage and look under and between seats for any items left on the school vehicle. Anything unusual or suspicious shall be immediately reported to the Head Bus Driver or designee and the ES.

- N) Drivers shall not engage in any distracting activity while operating the school vehicle, which includes, but is not limited to drinking, eating, reading, shaving, applying make-up, listening to music with headphones, writing, and filling out paperwork, etc.
- O) Using a cellular phone or a hands-free cellular device including ear Bluetooth devices is always prohibited while operating the school vehicle.
- P) At all times during the shift, all Drivers shall adhere to [DCF-III-E-1-001.2015](#), **Employee Dress Code**.
- Q) A strictly professional relationship shall always be maintained between the Driver and the student(s), parent(s), guardian(s), and caregiver(s). The Driver shall not engage in personal conversation with students. This includes giving advice on students' personal situations and calling students on their personal cellphones. Counseling students in any manner is prohibited. The Driver shall instead direct students', parents, and caregivers to contact the ES with any concerns. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.
- R) Drivers shall be trained, as required, in CPR, first aid, and defensive driving.
- S) Drivers and Escorts shall report all student-related concerns occurring on their vehicle to the ES and the Head Bus Driver or Designee at the conclusion of the run or sooner if necessary. The ES shall ensure that the [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT11](#), **Form T-3 School Vehicle Behavioral Incident Form** is completed and maintained at the RS.
 - 1) As appropriate for the program, the ES and the Head Bus Driver or designee shall develop a code word or phrase to use when there is imminent danger on the school vehicle that requires the attention of the police;
 - 2) When there is imminent danger, the Driver or escort shall call the RS, if possible, and use the code word or phrase;
 - 3) The ES or designee shall contact the local police immediately to provide the location of the school vehicle; and
 - 4) Dangerous situations include, but are not limited to those in which a student:
 - i. Is in possession of a weapon;
 - ii. Has made a terroristic or violent threat;
 - iii. Is violent;
 - iv. Is demonstrating a danger to them self or others; or
 - v. Is openly discussing on the school vehicle or DCF facility, a fear of another person either in or out of the school setting.

3) Escort Responsibilities

- A) Escorts shall maintain a strictly professional and confidential relationship with students, parents, guardians, and caregivers. An Escort shall refer questions and messages regarding the program, staff, and students to the ES.
- B) Escorts shall continually monitor all students on the school vehicle and shall assume responsibility for making decisions regarding student-related matters while the vehicle is in transit, consulting with the ES as necessary and feasible:
 - 1) Escorts shall assist with the loading and unloading of students; however,
 - i. When an ambulatory student requires assistance while boarding or exiting school vehicle, the caregiver shall provide any assistance required outside the vehicle; and
 - ii. Only the Driver shall operate the wheelchair lift when students in wheelchairs are boarding or exiting the vehicle;
 - 2) Escorts shall assure the students' comfort and safety while they are on the vehicle in accordance with this policy;
 - 3) Escorts shall assure that ambulatory students, students in wheelchairs, infants, and toddlers are properly secured before the vehicle moves;
 - 4) Escorts shall ensure that any approved loose items brought onto the vehicle by a passenger such as a backpack, baby stroller, oxygen, etc. are properly secured before the vehicle moves. This is to ensure those objects do not become potential projectiles in the event the vehicle stops suddenly (i.e. a backpack can be secured with the student's seat belt.); and
 - 5) Escorts shall assume responsibility for the direct care and supervision of the students already in the vehicle and shall not leave it at any time while students are in the vehicle.
- C) An Escort and Driver, as appropriate, shall report all student-related problems occurring on their vehicle to the ES and the Head Bus Driver or designee, immediately by cell phone or at the conclusion of the run.
 - 1) As appropriate for the program, the ES and the Head Bus Driver or designee shall develop a code word or phrase to use when there is imminent danger on the school vehicle that requires the attention of the police;
 - 2) When there is imminent danger, the Driver or Escort shall call the RS, if possible, and use the code word or phrase;
 - 3) The ES or designee shall contact the local police immediately to provide the location of the vehicle; and
 - 4) Dangerous situations include, but are not limited to, those in which a student:
 - i. Is in possession of a weapon;

- ii. Has made a terroristic or violent threat;
 - iii. Is violent;
 - iv. Is demonstrating a danger to them self or others; or
 - v. Is openly discussing on the school vehicle or DCF facility, a fear of another person either in or out of the school setting
- D) Escorts shall not, at any time, sleep, smoke, drink, eat, read a book, use a personal cell phone, or listen to music on headphones while in the school vehicle.
- E) Escorts are permitted to use the OOE cell phone for emergencies or at the request of the Driver.
- F) If the Driver becomes incapacitated the escort shall take control of the emergency.
- G) Escorts shall wear seat belts whenever the vehicle is in motion.
- H) All Escorts shall adhere to [DCF-III-E-1-001.2015](#), **Employee Dress Code**.

Key Terms (Definitions):

- Student Unattended on a School Vehicle **means** a student had been left unattended on the school vehicle and the driver left the vicinity of the vehicle.

Forms and Attachments:

- [OOE-Policy-37-A-ATT2](#), **School Vehicle Maintenance Report**
- [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT4](#), **School Bus Driver Certification Roster**
- [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT5](#), **Daily Vehicle Log**
- [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT6](#), **Bus Driver State Property Sign Out Sheet**
- [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT7](#), **E-Z Pass Report**
- [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT9](#), **Student Transportation Incident Report**
- [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT10](#), **Report of a Student Left Unattended on a School Bus**
- [OOE-Policy-37-B-ATT11](#), **Form T-3 School Vehicle Behavioral Incident Form**
- [State of NJ Vehicle Accident Form](#)
- [State of NJ Vehicle Incident Form](#)
- [NJMVC Drivers Vehicle Inspection Report](#)

Related Information:

- [DCF-III-E-1-001.2015](#), **Employee Dress Code**.

Policy History:

- Revised 9/8/2020
- Revised 5/31/2006
- Created 1/6/1997